

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MARCH, 1942

CONTENTS

FACTS TO BE FACED	33
NOTES OF THE MONTH	34
VALE ATQUE AVE	35
FILMS AND ARMY EDUCATION	36
NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS	37
CANADA'S CAMERA ON THE WAR CLOUDS <i>by Theodore Strauss</i>	38
A JOB TO BE DONE <i>by Bosley Crowther</i>	39
FILM AND REALITY <i>by Basil Wright</i>	40
SHORT FILM BOOKINGS FOR MARCH/APRIL	42
FILM SOCIETY NEWS	43
CORRESPONDENCE	43
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION FILMS <i>by Victor Seligman</i>	45
SUMMONS TO ARTISTS	45
SCIENTIFIC FILM SOCIETIES	46
DOCUMENTARY AND EDUCATION <i>by Edith Manvell</i>	47
FILM LIBRARIES	48

VOL 3 NO 3

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY FILM CENTRE 34 SOHO SQUARE LONDON W1

SIXPENCE

FACTS TO BE FACED

IF morale in Britain is low this is due, not to defeatism, but to frustration. Libya, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Java, the *Scharnhorst* episode, have all presented the British people with a vision of themselves in relation to the rest of the world which they have never seen before. "Lesser breeds without the law", and all sorts of "peculiar foreigners" are either inflicting ignominious defeats on us or are, for the present at least, our main defence against defeat. These and similar realisations are still in the process of sinking into our consciousness, and our sense of frustration is due not merely to them but also, and in greatest sense, to a feeling of hopeless inadequacy at home. The critics of the Government may well be wrong, but until something is done to prove them wrong, or until an active and convincing policy is outlined by the War Cabinet, the dangerous state of morale that at present exists will remain.

Maybe we shall achieve this summer a great victory. Victories are naturally good for morale. But victories cannot be won *without* morale. And the danger of the present situation is that our propaganda system is a failure. Years of neglect are bringing their harvest, and unless our propaganda switches to an active policy at home as well as abroad it is in danger of becoming a contributory factor to an unnecessary prolongation of the war.

Our propaganda has not failed merely for mechanical reasons. It has failed because it is bankrupt of ideas and bankrupt of policy.

It will continue to fail just as long as our propagandists continue to shut their eyes to the fact that we are living in the middle of a world revolution, and that therefore revolutionary tactics are not merely expedient but also absolutely vital.

The Press is the only propagandist medium not controlled by Government sources, and it can achieve much (more indeed than it is doing) by forming an independent focus of active criticism.

But media like radio and film—particularly as direct propaganda weapons—suffer from the disability of being, by and large, the mouthpiece of Government. A radical change in the Government's policy towards these two powerful media and what they say is an absolute necessity.

It is too late for authority to plead, cajole, or reassure. There must be no more radio-features or propaganda films whose main message (however interesting or box-office) is likely in any way to lead to a feeling of complacency. There is absolutely nothing to be complacent about.

Nor is it any use producing "calls to action" without their being backed by hard thinking—and how many official propagandists have done any hard thinking so far? *If people aren't working hard enough*

in the war effort there can, in the long run, be only one reason—that they have no basic incentive to an all-out effort. That basic incentive can be supplied either adventitiously and from without (e.g. an invasion of this country or an allied victory) or from within by a gigantic propaganda effort which will frankly admit that this is a revolutionary period, which will step down from the pedestal of present authority whenever necessary, which will formulate and implement the real ideas for which people as a whole are fighting (nobody in Britain has bothered to do this yet), and which will use all and every revolutionary tactic to gain its ends.

If propaganda is to play—as it must—a vital part in the winning of this war, our propagandists must adhere closely to the following principles:—

1. Consciousness that they are the vanguard of policy, and that therefore they must not merely keep in touch with, but, whenever necessary, merge themselves with the broad masses of the people.
2. They must be hard thinkers. Their leadership in strategy and tactics must be correct and far seeing, for they cannot be successful unless the mass of the people can, as time goes on, be convinced by experience that what the propagandists say is correct.

Only on such principles as these can we help to build up the iron discipline which is now so badly needed and which is the absolute necessity if we are to win.

Any survey of the present situation as regards propaganda makes it clear that these pre-requisites have been and are continuing to be neglected. How far this state of affairs can be remedied without drastic changes in a wider political field is a matter of some conjecture. But in any case it is the duty of all true propagandists in films or in radio to devote their own energies and thought to the purposes outlined, to campaign vigorously against ideas and subjects which do not fit into the scheme, and to play their part in converting inadequate official ideas into something approaching the active attitude which is needed.

It is not a question of stimulating a comatose people. It is a question of providing a means by which they can feel, in a practical sense, that there is an ultimate purpose, leading forward to a better state of affairs and not back to the *status quo*, in the present holocaust. Only if they are quite certain that they are fighting for a *positive* result (a new world) rather than a negative result ("beat the Axis and make the world safe for pre-1939 democracy"), can people freely give themselves to "the unprecedented torment and sacrifice, unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted

FILMS IN ARMY EDUCATION

A Report on a Year's Experiment in the Manchester Area. By JOHN MADDISON, Hon. Secretary of the Manchester Film Institute Society

THERE is considerable interest in the part films might play in Army education, and some months ago DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER published an account of the work being done voluntarily for the troops in Scotland by a group of enthusiasts, using non-theatrical films. In Manchester the Film Institute Society has completed a year's experiment along slightly different lines for the local Regional Committee for Adult Education in H.M. Forces. Here, in the somewhat formal terms of a short report prepared for our own official records, are those details of the scheme which may be of interest to other workers in the same field.

How the Scheme began and has Developed

The experiment began in a small informal way in February, 1941, when the Secretary was invited to give a series of illustrated lectures on film appreciation to a rather isolated searchlight unit in Cheshire. Conditions were primitive; silent films were projected on a Bell-Howell Filmo machine and the only electrical supply available was from the batteries of a service wagon. Perseverance was rewarded by the evident pleasure of the men when the first pictures flickered across the length of their Nissen hut. The course lasted some weeks, covered much of early film history, and concluded with a light-hearted session on the work of Chaplin.

Silent films only limited the value of the experiment, and we were fortunate in securing early the use of two sound projectors and the co-operation of two *cinéastes*, a business-man and a schoolmaster, as lecturers and projectionists. These two and the Secretary have carried on the work ever since, and throughout the year, up to six units, searchlight and anti-aircraft, have been visited each week. At one or two of the sites, continuity has been maintained for periods of over six months.

The vagaries of film supply have to some extent dictated the composition of the displays; the question of film copies (one remembers this as a crippling deterrent to the wide use of film in connection with school broadcasts) was bound to operate here. Programmes have, however, been organised along two main lines: (1) Film history and appreciation, (2) Home and World affairs and general knowledge. The proceedings at each site last about ninety minutes. The films are introduced by a short talk on subject matter or technique lasting from five to thirty minutes, and then there is opportunity for discussion and questions. Once the serious part is concluded, the occasion is rounded off with a few minutes of comedy or music. The talks are made popular and non-technical and wherever possible linked with the men's own experience. One or two examples may be quoted. A discussion of trick photography coincided fortunately with the general release of *Thief of Bagdad*; Harry

Watt's *Target for Tonight* offered comparisons with his earlier effort *North Sea*, then showing at many cinemas; *Tawny Owl* introduced as a lighter element, served for a discussion both of nature films and of the use of commentary; British and Soviet methods of film propaganda as seen in the films of the M.O.I. and Soviet War News Film Agency have been compared with lively consequences; Alexander Shaw's fine documentary *Five Faces of Malaya* was shown with dire appropriateness during the first week of December.

Occasionally a special speaker has been present; General de Gaulle's civil representative in the region answered questions arising from Paramount's *Free France* and a member of the University's Spanish Department talked about his own country when *Spanish Earth* was shown. (How stern and moving this film remains! It makes most of the propaganda efforts of this war appear adolescent. Its uncompromising tragedy seems better somehow for that intangible spiritual quality we called morale.)

The Reactions of Officers and Men

Attendance at the displays is, one gathers, entirely voluntary, and many informal sidelights reveal that the men appreciate and enjoy this new kind of leisure education. The best testimony to this is their continued presence; N.A.A.F.I. and Nissen huts are always crowded for these visits. Discussion is often lively, but questions asked sometimes underline the general public's ignorance of the serious aspects of cinema and of film appreciation which neither school nor radio is doing much to correct. There is evidence that the men approach the films we give them differently from the ones in the com-

mercial cinemas. Many of them have expressed a distinct preference for the information over the fiction film. Generally speaking, commissioned officers have been very helpful, and have taken an active interest in the displays; the discussions often have a democratic flavour, which is the best guarantee of good relations between the ranks.

Between 150 and 200 films have been shown during the year, but the following select list of about thirty is typical:

Film history and "Classics": *Early Actualities*, *Early Trick Films*, *Great Train Robbery*, *Voyage Across Impossible*, *Chaplin's First Films*, *Shoulder Arms*, *Dr. Caligari*, *Covered Wagon*, *General Line*, *Potemkin*, *Drawings that Walk and Talk*.

Famous documentaries: *Drifters*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Night Mail*, *The River*, *The City*, *Spanish Earth*, *Merchant Seamen*, *The Londoners*.

Actuality, Interest and Information films: *London Can Take It*, *Men of Africa*, *Peoples of Canada*, *Lion of Judah*, *White Eagle*, *March of Time* (various items), *Day at Soviet Front*, *Soviet Harvest*, *Stalin's Speech*, *Beaverbrook's Speech*, *King Penguins*, *Transfer of Power*.

Main sources of supply have been the Central Film Library, the National Film Library and the G.B.I. Library.

The whole scheme has been very successful, and we should like to see it extended, but both machines and voluntary personnel are hard to come by. The "lecturer-compère" for this kind of show must be pretty adaptable and have a genuine interest in cinema. It is, however, a type of service which should appeal to the more active in the Film Society Movement; it carries a good deal of pleasure and stimulation for the hard work involved.

SEVEN-LEAGUE

an independent documentary unit

has just completed

"THE COUNTRYWOMEN"

Directed by: John Page Associate Producer: Paul Rotha

and

H. M. Nieter (late of World Window)

has finished directing

"BLOOD TRANSFUSION"

A four reel film for scientific audiences.

produced by Paul Rotha Productions

In Production: A film on School Meals

SEVEN-LEAGUE PRODUCTIONS LTD.

H. M. NIETER E. S. FELLOWES-FARROW, M.A., M.Sc.
R. W. G. MacKAY, M.A., LL.B. E. P. STRELITZ

37, REGENT STREET, W.I.

'Phone: Reg. 3737

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Wood for War. *Production:* Canadian Army Film Unit. *Direction:* J. E. R. McDougall. *Camera:* George Noble. 10 minutes.

Subject: One part of the work done by volunteer Canadians in the war effort. Lumberjacks, using their great experience and skill, are felling timber in Britain for vital use in the war.

Treatment: By careful avoidance of overselling the subject the film has achieved an excellent balance. We are shown Canadian troops arriving in Britain and we see a special section of them being drafted to Scotland for timber work. Swiftly and efficiently the work is shown, making the quiet hillsides of Scotland look like a roaring lumber camp in an American toughie. Except that they, unfortunately, don't seem to do the leaps from log to log in the rapids any longer. It is always pleasant to see a good job superbly well done on the screen and we certainly see it here. It is a pity, though, that the men on the job are not brought to life a little more—they look interesting characters and the film might have shown something of them as human beings as well as tough technicians. There is a pub sequence, very nicely handled, at the end, but this does not quite satisfy the need for a more lively knowledge of these men who have come across an ocean to give us wood for war. Perhaps freer use of sound would have helped. But it's a nice job and we welcome this first film from the Canadian Army Film Unit.

Propaganda: Excellent. People from overseas, working in this country, in close contact with its people and working in a common cause, is one of the best possible propaganda lines.

Western Isles. *Production:* Merton Park Studios for the British Council. *Direction:* Terence Bishop. *Camera:* Jack Cardiff. *Sound:* C. Tasto. *Editor:* C. Beaumont. *Music:* William Alwyn. *Commentary:* Joseph MacLeod. 14 minutes.

Subject: This is a film of the making of Harris tweed which attempts also to depict the sterling qualities of the Hebrideans in the industry and to remind us of their contribution to the war effort. Since the importance of the manufacture of Harris tweed in a total war economy is not clear, the islanders' war effort is symbolised by the heroic return to his Hebridean home of a young merchant seaman whose ship has been torpedoed in the Atlantic.

Treatment. The film is in excellent Technicolor and shows in some detail the processes of tweed making from the gathering of the wool to the washing of the finished material. The film centres round the work of a single family to which the returning seaman belongs. Scenes of the family making its tweed are cross-cut with shots of the young sailor's journey home in an open boat. He is eventually thrown up, more dead than alive, on the coast near his parents' croft, having contrived—apparently by instinct—to steer himself and his companions to the waters he knows best. This part of the story is less convincing than the shots of the special skills and local rituals associated with the making of tweed. There are good traditional songs, well sung, and the acting of the principal characters is adequate on a somewhat naive and wooden level, which does, however, manage to convey something of the dourness and stoicism of the Hebridean.

Propaganda Value. Little propaganda good can

surely come from suggesting to film audiences overseas that the tweed industry is one of our principal national concerns of the moment. Terence Bishop has, however, succeeded in counteracting in some measure the usual mistakes of British Council propaganda by introducing the shipwreck theme which at any rate admits the existence of a state of war.

Wavell's 30,000. *Production:* Ian Dalrymple. *Direction:* John Monck. *Camera:* A.F.U. *Commentary:* Colin Wills. *Music:* John Greenwood. 50 minutes.

Subject: This film tells the story of Wavell's advance into Libya.

Treatment. The visuals consist for the most part of newsreel material and Army Film Unit footage with which we are already familiar. The film is given continuity and shape by the use of maps and the introduction of participants in the battle who describe the strategies in terms of their own roles. The resultant picture of the battle is not over clear and we are left with the impression of a number of separate engagements which do not integrate into any single tactical conception. This serious criticism would have been met by an overriding policy statement by Wavell himself or some other qualified spokesman.

Propaganda Value. *Wavell's 30,000* does succeed in bringing the battle alive in terms of personal experience. It will help give the civilian a clearer conception of what actually is meant by mechanised warfare and it provides an excellent example of the extent to which newsreel material gains in significance if it is edited instead of just being joined together.

Newspaper Train. *Production:* Realist Film Unit. *Direction:* Len Lye. *Camera:* A. E. Jeakins. *Commentary:* Merril Mueller. *Recording:* Ernst Meyer. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

Subject: *Newspaper Train* shows how, during the period of the blitz, newspapers were regularly delivered to every part of the country.

Treatment. The story is told by an American newspaper man and shows how, in spite of a series of bombs which one night cut off one London terminus after another, the Ramsgate newspaper train did eventually get away on its journey. The film is full of technical ingenuity. The raid itself is represented by explosions and severed lines on a railway map, accompanied by raid noises, and telephoned instructions diverting newspaper vans and loaders from one station to another as line after line is cut. In spite of the absence of actual raid scenes the effect is amazingly realistic. The exhaustion of the trainguards after they eventually leave London is neatly conveyed and their reaction to machine-gun attack by a German fighter is the real thing. Here, again, we do not see the raiding plane, but only its ominous shadow paralleling the track and then moving across the train as its machine-guns sound. The pay-off to the story takes place in the office of the editor of the *Daily Express*. A Ramsgate newsagent has sent in bullets found embedded in his batch of copies. Unfortunately, Mr. Christiansen and Mr. Mueller, the reporter-narrator, appear to have been too much influenced by Hollywood newspaper films to give a convincing performance.

Propaganda Value. There appears to have been no good reason for making this film at the present time. Even though, by an oversight, due credit was not given during the blitz to the heroisms which lay behind regular newspaper deliveries it is surely too late to do much about it now. It is high time that blitz-based propaganda were forgotten, and surely the M.O.I. has more immediately urgent uses to which to put its weekly five minutes?

Keeping Rabbits for Extra Meat. M.O.I. for the Ministry of Agriculture. *Production:* Strand Film Co. *Associate Producer:* Edgar Anstey. *Direction:* Ralph Bond. *Camera:* Charles Marlborough. *Commentary:* Wilfred Pickles. Non-T. 10 minutes.

Subject: This film is intended to persuade people that it is worth while keeping tame rabbits in order to increase the meat ration. It stresses the importance of choosing a healthy doe and gives concise information on breeding, the care of the young, types of hutches and how to make them, and the feeding of rabbits on kitchen waste and the official bran ration. The film comes to an abrupt end as a housewife brings a rabbit stew to the dinner table.

Treatment. As an information film for the beginner in rabbit-keeping, it is practical and direct. Camera work and commentary are clear and unhurried. A little more information about feeding, and advice on how to deal with the disconcerting ailments which afflict rabbits and discourage the amateur would be welcome. The way to kill a rabbit is left out altogether—a serious omission. It is, however, better to give a little essential information efficiently than to overload a film of this kind with too many details, since its main purpose is to persuade people that to keep rabbits is quite a simple business.

Propaganda value. The value of this film is one of direct instruction rather than to make people conscious that there is a real urgency in increasing our food production. It answers most of the queries which those who intend to take up rabbit-keeping might ask. The importance of Rabbit Clubs might have been stressed as they would follow up in greater detail the information which this film provides.

Ferry Pilot. *Production:* Ian Dalrymple. *Direction:* Pat Jackson. *Camera:* H. E. Fowle. *Editor:* R. Q. McNaughton. *Music:* Brian Easdale. 35 minutes.

Subject: The story of the work of the A.T.A. which provides personnel to fly newly completed aircraft from factory to Service airfield and in general moves aircraft across the country (or across the Atlantic) at such times as they are not in the hands of R.A.F. pilots.

Treatment. The film first shows how ferry pilots' work is organised and establishes in dialogue sequences the variety and importance of their job. Then we see planes being ferried by men and women pilots and we are given some idea of the special problems which arise from the need to have pilots available in the right place at the right time—often at remote airfields at short notice. The film finishes with an unarmed bomber unwittingly escaping enemy attack by the skin of its teeth and this sequence, plus an earlier aero-

(Continued on page 46)

CANADA'S CAMERA ON THE WAR CLOUDS

By THEODORE STRAUSS

Reprinted by courtesy of the *New York Times*

AT A TIME when the United States is massively assembling its energies for total war, and all the parts of that mountainous effort must of necessity be closely interrelated, it might be well to look northward briefly to Canada, where one weapon, as yet still wavering in the hands of nearly a dozen agencies in Washington, has been brought into full use on the home front. That weapon is the film. With the exception of Russia and Germany no nation has been so sensitive to the incalculable importance of films in readying the public first for the crucial demands of all-out war and secondly for the changed world of the peace to come.

Perhaps much of the feeble confusion which now marks our use of fact film in creating an intensified public awareness to the issues in this conflict and in showing the average citizen what its successful prosecution will require of him is related to a lack of centralised authority in other quarters. But the fact is that the exploitation of films in Washington is still characterised by the overlapping efforts of numerous agencies with at best an only sporadically intelligible policy. We have many random efforts, scattered results; many agencies, faulty co-operation, many piecemeal plans, no policy.

How Canada Does It

Meanwhile, the framework for government-sponsored films in Canada stands in direct contradiction to the footloose agencies in Washington. The Canadian film effort has reached its present momentum because of three salient facts. First, it has centralised all government film interests and production under a single board and placed the execution of the government's programme under the direct supervision of professional film-makers instead of departmental amateurs. Second, it has made integrated use of the existent facilities of private film industry and in those films intended for theatrical distribution it has successfully met professional standards of entertainment and dramatic interest. Third, it has a flexible but clearly articulated government policy which relates the work of all units and departments in a cohesive programme. Admittedly, Canada's film problems differ from our own and are considerably less complex, but the important thing is that they have been brought into a single pattern.

This year the National Film Board of Canada will produce and release an approximate total of 150,000 feet of film in 150 items, of which forty or fifty will be of two reels or more. The cost will run at \$1,000 to an occasional \$7,000 per reel. This output is not a vague blueprint; it is based upon present production rates. It is divided between theatrical and non-theatrical films. Of these, the former category includes the "Canada Carries On" series, films roughly comparable to the March of Time in technique, which alternate between those short subjects, internationally distributed, describing Canada's relation to the world war, and those for national distribution which describe Canada's war effort in more purely national terms. The theatrical releases also include weekly news clips and novelty trailers on government campaigns; one-reel musicals incorporating patriotic choruses, and a news review in French.

Non-theatrical Audience

The non-theatrical films are devised to bring specific information and exhortation to specific audiences such as the Air Raid Precautions or the Women's Auxiliaries; audiences which are being intensively organised. This category comprises departmental films reporting on specific aspects of the war effort, films promoting tourism in Canada, films for the armed services, films prepared from overseas material showing what other countries are doing on matters of interest to Canada, and purely instructional films.

All this production is under the direct control of the National Film Board, which was established several years ago according to a bill drawn up by John Grierson, the dynamic little Scot who is now its executive officer. Under his plan all the government departments are required by statute to bring statements of their film needs to the board, which guarantees against duplication of effort and fits the departmental films into an overall scheme of production. Furthermore, all government relations with the film industry are channelised through the board, which is acquainted with the industry's point of view.

Men at the Helm

The film board as now constituted includes two government Ministers, three senior civil servants and three members of the public selected for their interest in and knowledge of the film as an instrument of public policy. Mr. Grierson, the film

commissioner, in whose hands the day-to-day initiative remains, makes a monthly accounting to the board of work in progress. Inasmuch as most of the films are paid for out of the budgets of departments requesting them, the budget of Mr. Grierson's department is hardly more than is necessary to maintain an office staff and a minimal number of technicians and laboratory workers. Whenever the spate of production exceeds the capacities of his own department, the film commissioner farms out the tasks to private producers under the direction of one of his own supervisors, or makes use of private laboratory facilities.

The production staff—producers, directors and cameramen—now operating in seven units is maintained on a strictly temporary basis simply to act as a prod on personal initiative in the quarter where it counts most. As Mr. Grierson explains: "I have a staff of conscience-stricken men". He places a premium on young men. Several, such as Stuart Legg, who is now brilliantly editing the "Canada Carries On" series, are comparatively experienced men who have worked with Mr. Grierson during his years as a documentary producer for the British Government. The others are bright young men with "a head of steam" who are rapidly trained.

No Handicaps Asked

Up to the present this staff has done better than
(Continued on page 39)

"Living Movement" . . .

CARLYLE defined Progress in just those two words!

In paying due tribute to the aptness of the sage's definition the Kinematograph Weekly translates the spirit into action. Current events are reported for our readers in relation to the general advance, artistic and technical, by which progress in Kinematography is achieved.

*Keep abreast of progress in your craft
—read the*

**Kine^{matograph}
WEEKLY**

93 LONG ACRE : : LONDON : : W.C.2

well in competing with other commercial short subjects for theatrical distribution. From the very beginning Mr. Grierson made it plain that those films intended for theatrical showings would be sold and not given away to lie unused on a projection room floor. It was his intention to sell the films on their own merits and to use the commercial success of the films as a yardstick to measure their popularity and impact upon the public. Judged by those standards, the National Film Board is doing the job it set out to do. Of the 1,000-odd theatres in Canada approximately 900 exhibitors to-day are showing the "Canada Carries On" series and paying better prices for them than for any other short subjects.

As its ultimate goals, the Canadian film effort is trying to crystallise an awakening sense of a unified national identity in a young country which has still only partly assimilated its numerous racial streams. More immediately, the film board (and here Mr. Grierson quotes Walter Lippmann's phrase) is interested in giving the public "a pattern of thought and feeling regarding the war". It is concerned with stating in simple, dramatic terms such essential themes as the relation of Canada's mineral resources to the strategy of the war as a whole. It is trying to explain graphically the strategy of food and oil,

the remote origins of pressures that raise the cost of bread or gasoline for the man in the street, the reasons why his country's frontier may well lie in Libya or Norway and why his sons and brothers are fighting on extra-territorial battlefields. In such films as *Atlantic Patrol* or *Letter from Aldershot*, it is trying to bridge the gap between the public and the front line.

Destinations

Mr. Legg once quoted Ludendorff as saying that propaganda is the pace-maker of policy. But if, in a very deep sense, the films of the Canadian National Film Board are propaganda, they are much different from the negative and sensational broadsides of the last war. These films are an attempt to give the people a great hope and a great faith in themselves and in a brave new world. Instead of using the films to outsmart the public, to rush it unthinking into situations it does not foresee, the film board is dramatising, simplifying and bringing into perspective the enormous and complex issues of this war. It is making the people full partners in the grim but hopeful odyssey of this generation. And it is achieving this end only because its purposes are clearly conceived and their execution systematic.

main free in so far as national security will permit". Therefore, there is no immediate task of guiding entertainment films. But the vital function of producing so-called morale films—the shorts and manifold briefs intended to inform the public on war activities—is divided among several agencies, each with its own job to do. And the consequence is that a haphazard flow of films may very soon clog the works. In addition to making their own intramural training films, the Army and the Navy are ready to pass films along to the public. The Treasury Department has been feeding defence-bond briefs for some time. The Agriculture Department may have its films to release. And, of course, the Office of Emergency Management has been most active in turning out shorts giving a factual survey of several defence subjects.

The time has come for a quick, and efficient adjustment of this set-up. And from every commonsense angle it would seem that Mr. Mellett would be wise to acquire for himself one or more advisers with vast experience in the picture field and a superior capacity to vision the job which must be done with films right now. Then it would seem most intelligent to gauge the public's probable response to films with a war-effort content; films designed to build up the morale, and set a definite schedule by which these films should be fed to exhibitors. This schedule, of course, should be co-ordinated with the run of commercial films so that a proper proportion of one to the other might exist at all times.

And, finally, it would seem most advisable to take advantage as much as possible of the established, experienced industry which exists for producing films in this country. No finer or more capable movie-makers can be found any place in the world than the ones we have right here. No more efficient producing organisations could be built than those we have functioning. The March of Time, for instance, has been making for years the sort of films which are quite effective in conveying information and inspiration to the public. Numerous AI shorts producers are available in Hollywood to turn out morale pictures along whatever lines laid down. Let Mr. Mellett tell them what he wants; they'll turn it in.

Eyes and Ears

And, by the same token, it would seem logical to make extensive use of the present newsreel organisations for the distribution of news. Obviously, the various armed services will maintain strict supervision of their fields, and their own augmented film units—especially the Navy's excellent group, trained by John Ford (now Commander) and in the March of Time's new service training school—may be counted upon to cover combat actions in far-flung areas. But the newsreels are old, experienced organs; they know what it's all about. As much opportunity for initiative and co-operative enterprise as is practical should be given them.

There is no ready-made formula to cover this complex problem of enlisting the screen in the war. The experience of the English film-makers is not entirely applicable, nor is the smoothly working set-up of the Canadian Ministry of Information's film unit, explained on this page last week, a blueprint to be followed literally. But our problem can be solved, and solved handsomely, if a good deal of common sense is applied and too many selfish rivalries are not permitted to intrude. This is no time for professional fencing. We need good films.

A JOB TO BE DONE

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

Bosley Crowther, in a recent article in the *New York Times* writes: "Confusion and lack of policy mark the outset of our wartime film programme." Reprinted by courtesy of the *New York Times*. Slightly abridged.

BACK in those halcyon peace-times, when war was but a dimly looming cloud, much speculation was devoted by people of a social turn of mind to the speed with which our mass communicators—namely, the films and radio—would be geared to psychological expedients when the fated M-day arrived. No one seemed to doubt for a moment that, the second the lid blew off, the air would be charged with inspiration and the screen would bulge with pat intelligence. One of the many surprises of the past disturbing six weeks has been the notable absence of any such evolutions. And, in so far as the medium of the screen is broadly concerned this deeply interested corner must express some disappointment too.

Let us all be thankful that fools have not rushed blindly in and dashed off hysterical pictures which wise men have apparently eschewed. Also let us be thankful that the screen has not been swamped with rank preachers. But don't let's be too confident that something of the sort might not occur without a most intelligent, co-ordinated plan to cover films. And let us remark regretfully—but not impatiently yet—that no such plan, officially drawn up, has been apparent at the time this goes to press.

The problem of putting motion pictures to most effective use in a nation at war as ours is and with the commercial organisation we have here requires a masterful solution comprehending many elements. First, of course, it is necessary to have a general idea of the over-all accomplishment desired or expected from films—how much the medium should continue simply to en-

ertain; how much, and in what particular manner, it should be used for the building of morale, and how far it should be permitted to reveal to the public spot news. Second, it is essential to know who or what particular groups are best qualified to turn out the films which are so desired. And third—but not least important—there is the problem of distribution, the delicate task of funneling so much film out to the public.

At present, Lowell Mellett, head of the Office of Government Reports, is the man whose job (among others) it is to give the films an ordered plan, to co-ordinate the activities of several government film-producing agencies with the complicated structure of the commercial industry and to shape, apparently, a policy which would govern our war-time screen. Needless to say, Mr. Mellett, who has had no previous experience with films, is compelled to rely very largely upon the advice and services of others, plus the co-operation, generously bestowed, of the industry's own War Activities Committee.

Confusing the Issue

Although it is patently unfair to expect a perfect programme to be placed in operation within such a brief space of time, it is also natural to deplore the confusion which now quite obviously exists.

Nor does the present set-up make matters less difficult. There has, as yet, been no move made to regulate Hollywood, and President Roosevelt, in his letter appointing Mr. Mellett as co-ordinator of films, said that "the motion picture must re-

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MONTHLY SIXPENCE

VOL. 3 NUMBER 3
MARCH 1942

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

stands for the use of film as a medium of propaganda and instruction in the interests of the people of Great Britain and the Empire and in the interests of common people all over the world.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER is produced under the auspices of **Film Centre, London**, in association with **American Film Center, New York**.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Edgar Anstey
Alexander Shaw
Donald Taylor
John Taylor
Basil Wright

EDITOR
Ronald Horton

Outside contributions will be welcomed but no fees will be paid.

We are prepared to deliver from 3-50 copies in bulk to Schools, Film Societies and other organisations.

Owned and published by

FILM CENTRE LTD.
34 SOHO SQUARE LONDON

W.1

GERRARD 4253

FILM AND REALITY

By BASIL WRIGHT

WITH A boldness only equalled by that of Dr. Johnson when he set out to compile his English Dictionary, Cavalcanti has, in *Film and Reality*, attempted, all on his own, to describe the development of the realist film over the past fifty years in an opus which runs for an hour and three quarters and contains extracts from fifty different films.

The result is a remarkable document, impressive for the wealth of its contents and (to myself at least) in many places controversial as regards its choice of material, and its attitude towards the social, as opposed to the academic or aesthetic development of the realist film. But whatever else it may be, it is certainly stimulating; after seeing it most people will find themselves considering the wider perspectives and the future possibilities which arise from this particular branch of film making.

Film and Reality, being as it were the only visual reference-work dealing with a special type of cinematic endeavour, deserves close and detailed attention from the critical standpoint. And if my own criticism should appear too personal, no doubt others, including I hope Cavalcanti, will hasten to correct, refute, or amplify.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE FILM

As might be expected, *Film and Reality* is at its safest when it deals with history, or with chapters in realist development which can be regarded as more or less complete.

The First Section (which is preceded by a prologue detailing Dr. Marey's early experiments and the first film made by the Lumières), explains how a new form of dramatic entertainment quickly arose from the new invention. Extracts from *The Life of Charles Peace*, *The Great Train Robbery*, and *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*, reveal how the essentials of the movie medium were quickly lost as producers turned more and more to the straight photography of theatrical mime. Incidentally D. W. Griffiths was probably the man who did most to rescue cinema from this blind alley, and this section might well have ended with a brief extract from *Birth of a Nation*.

The Second Section shows how newsreels and interest films have always formed a continuous thread of contact with reality, whatever deviations the rest of the cinematic world might be indulging in. Here Cavalcanti very properly points out that both the newsreel and the interest film, being forms of visual record and little else, are unlikely to vary much in attitude and content, being affected only by improvements in photographic apparatus and similar mechanical developments. There is certainly little difference between the rioting suffragettes of 1906 and the panicky crowds milling around the killer of King Alexander in 1934.

Two excerpts in this section have a special visual impact. The first is a short sequence of Chinese families burying their dead after the execution of revolutionaries in 1909; this might have been made yesterday. The second is an extract from Ponting's famous film of Scott's last expedition; which is, with *Nanook*, a remarkable reminder of the superb photographic quality which was obtainable with the old orthochromatic film. Incidentally, the camera

which Ponting used on this expedition has been in possession of the British documentary movement since 1932 and as far as I know is still in use.

The Third Section is perhaps the most complete and most memorable of the whole opus. But I wonder if Cavalcanti is right in describing *Documentaries of Far-Off Lands* by the epithet "romantic"? It hardly fits Poirier's *Eve Africaine*, and Allegret and Gide's *Voyage au Congo*, both of which confirmed for me once again my feeling that the French directors who took their cameras overseas were often more *voyeurs* than *voyageurs*. Nor, certainly, is the word "romantic" applicable to Wavrin's *Pays du Scalp*. This, like Bunuel's *Land without Bread* (not represented in the film) is a straight ethnological study; and the sight of natives eating live slugs, however well filmed and however interesting, is hardly romantic.

Flaherty of course, is the big man of this section, which is indeed completely overshadowed by the wonderful tattooing sequence from *Moana*; but here again I would even prefer to use the adjective "exotic" in its original dictionary sense, to "romantic".

The terrific realism of the crossing of the river in *Grass* is the other dominating factor in this section. *Grass*, without doubt, is one of the great realist classics, and worthy of constant revival along with *Nanook* and *Moana*. And, talking of early American films of fact what has become of *Chang*, with its terrific picture of man's eternal struggle with the jungle?

But it is Section Four, dealing as it does with the sociological development of the film of fact which has obviously given Cavalcanti the most trouble and which is bound to be the most controversial. For this is the point where the historical merges with the contemporaneous, and where, incidentally, Cavalcanti's pre-occupation with aesthetics is at its most dangerous. Personally I do not believe that any one man is in a position to select extracts from the huge bulk of production during the past ten years. With practically all the producers and directors of the films still at work, a personal selection is bound to be too arbitrary. Far better to have a selection committee, however heated the discussions which might result.

As it is, I think that Cavalcanti has missed two things—firstly the real meaning of the sociological approach which was preceded and signalled by his own *Rien Que les Heures* and by Ruttman's *Berlin* and which under Grierson's inspiration and leadership has formed the permanent basis of all documentary production in this country for the past twelve years. Secondly—and this is very surprising from Cavalcanti—he has, in dealing with the Grierson documentary, almost ignored the dynamic use of sound a factor to which he himself has made such a great contribution. The various early experiments in sound were important not merely from the aesthetic point of view but because they were designed to strengthen and clarify the sociological angle. Yet, barring an extract from *Housing Problems* and another from *Night Mail*, the uninitiated might well get the impression that the realist film had hardly left the stage of musical accompaniment.

One of the most important developments in

documentary has been the introduction of dialogue sequences, using sometimes raw material, sometimes actors, sometimes a mixture of both. Yet, in the extract from *North Sea*, Cavalcanti gives us a sequence which might just as easily have been shot in the *Drifters* period as in 1938, whereas the great wealth of dialogue material in the film (e.g. the conference in the cabin) obviously had an absolute claim for representation.

Similarly the historical importance of Rotha's *Contact* is hardly great enough to justify its inclusion if it is to mean the omission of the same director's *Shipyard*, in which the sociological approach and also the use of sound is far more representative of both the aims and the development of the realist movement in Britain.

Other selections in this sequence are more a matter of personal choice. I myself think that Cavalcanti has done less than justice to *Rien Que les Heures*, *Turk-Sib*, *Drifters* and *The Spanish Earth*. But others may think otherwise.

There is one other omission, and that is the analytic film dealing with mechanical or scientific processes or with their theory and practice—a genre in which Britain has, in its documentary movement, done pioneer work. No reference at all is made to such films as *Aero-Engine*, *Transfer of Power* or *Airscrew*.

As regards the Final Section, which is entitled "Realism in the Story Film", I confess myself entirely baffled. I agree in some respects with Cavalcanti's contention that: "To-day the theatrical film still holds a prominent place in the cinema, but has undergone no fundamental change since the days of *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* and *The Lady of the Camellias*. Film technique has been developed mainly by seeking to represent reality. Because the filmmaker's material is not make-up and scenery, but photography and sound-recording, the best work in the cinema has been done by those who have remembered what the first inventors never doubted, that the essence of cinematography lies in its power to represent reality."

But I find it difficult to reconcile the structure and choice of his last section with his thesis.

It begins beautifully with a magnificent sequence from Stiller's *The Old Manor*. Then comes the river crossing from *The Covered Wagon* (speaking personally once again, I would have chosen, from the point of view of realism, the Indian attack on the encampment—do you remember the horse going over the cliff?) Then—after a perfunctory morsel of Mix—we are treated to three comparisons. The first is between Eisenstein's mutiny sequence from *Potemkin* and a stagey version of the same thing made in France by Ferdinand Zecca in 1907. The second depicts the clearing of the court room during the Dreyfus investigation, as done by Dieterle in *Emile Zola* (1937) and by George Melies (c. 1900). The third contrasts a scene from *Love from a Stranger* (Britain 1937) with Sarah Bernhardt in *The Lady of the Camellias* (France 1912).

I am no doubt very dull in the head, but I do not see how these contrasts add to the argument. Zecca's *Potemkin* is as wildly funny as you might expect; Eisenstein's mutiny scenes are still dramatic, dynamic, and the whole sequence is still an absolute classic of cutting. But if, as I take it the contrast needed is between theatricalism and realism in the story film, the argument surely can only be effective if two nearly contemporary works are chosen. A big

sequence from a de Mille super would have been a reasonable contrast.

The scene from *Emile Zola* is apparently chosen not for its essential interest, but because it matches the scene from the Melies' film. *Zola* was a magnificent film, but this sequence, torn from its context, means very little in terms of realism or anything else.

Finally we have *Love from a Stranger*—a sequence put in to show that films are still sometimes no more than photographed stage plays. Could we not have taken this for granted? The sequence is merely boring and forms no sort of contrast to the historically interesting excerpt from the Bernhardt film, which might well have been included in the first section.

The film is not yet over. To conclude it we are given three extracts from story films, presumably because they are notable for their realism. Of the first two of these—*Kameradschaft* and *Le Grande Illusion*—I do not think anyone could complain. But why the trooship sequence from *Farewell Again?* For myself at least it formed a depressing, lamentable, and very bewildering ending to 9,500 feet of impressive or stimulating material of all sorts.

Film and Reality is too important a work to be glibly dismissed with faint or frantic praise. And whatever I may have said about it I am certain that it does, despite the faults I have stated, form a remarkable document which will be of great use to students and to all others interested in the realistic approach to cinema. It would be interesting to make a parallel job called *Film and Reality No. II*, which would be devoted, not to aesthetic considerations, but to a study of the sociological approach combined with the new developments in technique which arose from the desire of realist film-makers (especially in Britain, due to Grierson's genius) to find more vivid means of expression. Himself a pioneer in this field, I am certain that Cavalcanti would agree, and would, this time, consult his contemporaries more freely on the selection of the relevant material.

II. TODAY AND TOMORROW

Not the least valuable aspect of *Film and Reality* lies in the fact that it is bound to stimulate many of us to consider the present state of affairs in the development of the realist film, and to look a little way into the future.

Cavalcanti's survey very properly stops short before September, 1939 . . . Since then we have had two and a half years of war in which needs as well as conditions of film-making have changed very considerably. All available personnel has been pressed into the urgent needs of wartime propaganda and wartime information. Output has increased enormously.

When the war began documentary was no longer in its experimental stage. Realist traditions had by then been firmly established, and the results of the experiments of the previous ten years had been crystallised into several different styles. Nevertheless that static stage, which in any movement is the prelude to complete necrosis, had in no sense been reached. On the contrary, in the years immediately preceding World War II the realist movement was beginning to concern itself firstly with larger and broader treatments of subject matter, and secondly with an increased use of dramatic incident and dialogue (cf. *The Londoners* and *North Sea*, to give but two examples).

In some senses the gulf between the documentary and the realistic film story was narrowing. Not only had the British realist movement

begun to influence film-makers in other countries (most notably the U.S.A., where a vigorous documentary movement was by now established) but also there was, in the studio world, a re-crudescence of that realistic approach which had flared up all over the world in the mid-twenties but which had been thoroughly smothered by the coming of sound.

The realist workers in those days were increasingly occupied with internationalism. It wasn't mere chance which found Cavalcanti in Switzerland shooting the material for *We Live in Two Worlds*, or which found Grierson and myself, in the same country, discussing with the International Labour Office plans for world production, distribution, and international exchange of all films of sociological content.

By 1939 the realist movement was all set for a series of major developments.

Where do we stand now?

I am not one of those who believe that war essentially stifles all creative impulse, although I am certain that it limits it. To this it is, I think, correct to add the rider that discipline is good for the creative worker, provided the discipline comes from the right quarters and with the right motives. The motive for making wartime documentaries will be regarded by no one as other than sensible. Indeed, the most striking thing about the last two years of realist film making has been that—if only for lack of any official lead—the documentary workers have evolved their own discipline and done all they can to impose it on themselves. There has, in other words, been no diminution of the basic documentary thesis: "We are propagandists first and film makers second."

Literally hundreds of films have been made during the past two years, and it is perhaps only too easy to forget that their widespread distribution, both in the cinemas and non-theatrically, has given the documentary film an audience coverage infinitely larger than anything it had attained in peacetime.

The urgencies of the moment make for simplicity of construction and treatment. Only in a few major efforts (e.g. *Target for Tonight*) is it possible to elaborate the script and involve oneself in the complications of a large number of interrelated incidents.

I would sum up the existing situation first by claiming that documentary has no cause to be ashamed of its wartime record. Its workers, often under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, have fully carried out the jobs that needed doing. But secondly, I feel that this is no time for complacency. I think all of us feel that much of our production is not up to that level of achievement which we have always set ourselves.

Is it enough to satisfy the demands of official sponsors, however well we do it? It is surely our job, as pioneers (and such we have always been) to be a step ahead of the rest.

Now, and for the remainder of the war, the keyword is "Urgency". Today the realist film needs to achieve greater punch. It must be active. It must without fail and without pause devote itself to the urgencies of the moment with the same dynamic emphasis which marked the revolutionary period of the Soviet film. The social experience of documentary is ideally suited to this propaganda task, which is, firstly to impel immediate and all-out action in the direct crisis of war, and secondly, to pave the way for the post-war drive; both these aims being completely interwoven.

(Continued next page)

(Continued from page 41)

I believe absolutely that the revolutionary technique is now the only technique. Whether you like it or not, we are undergoing a world social revolution here and now, and it is a revolution which must continue after the war, and continue with increasing strength. For that is the only thing the people of Britain are fighting for.

It is today the job of documentary to integrate the immediate war-effort with the facts and implications of radical social and economic changes which are part and parcel of it.

Only from this standpoint can we get into our films the dynamic impulse which will strengthen their propaganda value to this nation and its allies.

The realist tradition is rich in the abilities for the job. The whole trend of the 'thirties was towards this dynamic concept (we said we were trying to make Peace as exciting as War), and the films which were made tended more and more to sacrifice purely aesthetic considerations to the need for pungent comment and the imaginative presentation of facts and problems.

Today the intensification of effort which is so urgently needed depends on an equal intensification of morale-propaganda; and if we don't pull our punches any longer we have a vital contribution to make.

I believe that the future of the realist film (if one can spare a moment to look ahead in such parochial terms) lies in the attitude and action which I have outlined. Our films must be the shock troops of propaganda. It is no longer policy to compromise with timidity—either among ourselves or in others. The documentary movement is part of a continuous process and a continuous progress towards a new deal in life for the peoples of the world. And the only slogan worth having today is "Speed it up!"

SIGHT and SOUND

SPRING NUMBER

CONTRIBUTORS:

JYMPSON HARMAN
(*Evening News*)

GEORGE H. ELVIN
(*A.C.T.*)

F. L. THOMAS
(*20th Century*)

HECTOR McCULLIE
(*Exhibitor*)

Price 6d.

Published by: The British Film Institute,
4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

SHORT FILM BOOKINGS FOR MARCH—APRIL

The following bookings for March and April are selected from a list covering its Members, supplied by the News and Specialised Theatres Association

Week commencing	Keep Shooting	Week commencing
April 12th	The Tatler Theatre, Birmingham	29th
March 29th	Leningrad—Gateway to Soviet Russia	April 12th
April 5th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	22nd
March 22nd	Lives in Peril	29th
22nd	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	March 22nd
29th	The News Theatre, Birmingham	22nd
29th	The News Theatre, Bristol	29th
April 5th	Malibu Beach Party	
March 22nd	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	April 12th
22nd	Man the Enigma	5th
29th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	March 26th
29th	March of Time—Battlefields of the Pacific	
April 5th	The World's News Theatre, W.2	
March 29th	March of Time—Main Street U.S.A.	
April 5th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	22nd
March 22nd	March of Time—7th Year, No. 9	
22nd	Victoria Station News Theatre, S.W.1	April 5th
22nd	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	March 30th
22nd	March of Time—7th Year, No. 10	
22nd	Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.	
22nd	March of Time—7th Year, No. 9	
22nd	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	April 5th
22nd	Meet the Stars, No. 5	March 22nd
22nd	The News Theatre, Leeds	April 5th
22nd	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	
22nd	Meet the Stars, No. 6	12th
22nd	The News Theatre, Leeds	
22nd	Mickey's Elephants	5th
April 12th	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	
March 29th	More Trials of Importance	March 22nd
29th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	
29th	Moth and the Flame	26th
29th	Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.	
April 5th	Northern Neighbours	
March 22nd	The Tatler Theatre, Birmingham	22nd
29th	Old Natchez of Mississippi	
29th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	29th
29th	Old New Mexico	
March 30th	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	22nd
April 12th	The News Theatre, Bristol	April 12th
April 12th	The News Theatre, Leeds	12th
March 29th	Old New Orleans	March 29th
29th	The Tatler Theatre, Birmingham	30th
29th	The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	April 5th
29th	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	
April 5th	Plane Sailing	March 29th
5th	The News Theatre, Manchester	
March 23rd	Please Answer	April 5th
26th	The News Theatre, Leeds	
22nd	Queen Cotton	March 22nd
22nd	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	
April 12th	Raising Sailors	29th
5th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	
March 29th	Russian Salad	29th
April 5th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	
22nd	So You Think You Know Your Music, No. 1	29th
22nd	The News Theatre, Leeds	
22nd	Stage Fright	29th
22nd	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	
April 5th	Stone	
12th	The Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	April 12th
12th	Stranger than Fiction, 88	12th
29th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	
22nd	Sun Fun	March 26th
22nd	Victoria Station News Theatre, S.W.1	
22nd	Tee Up	22nd
22nd	The News Theatre, Bristol	
22nd	The Carpenters	22nd
22nd	Tatler News Reel Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	
12th	The Great Meddler	22nd
12th	The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	
12th	The Gun	23rd
12th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	
12th	The Happiest Man on Earth	April 12th
12th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	March 29th
12th	The Hockey Champ	23rd
12th	The Tatler News Theatre, Liverpool	
12th	Training Police Horses	April 12th
12th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	12th
12th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	
12th	Two Little Orphans	March 22nd
12th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	
12th	Tyneside	23rd
12th	Victoria Station News Theatre, S.W.1	
12th	Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1	26th
12th	The News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	April 5th
March 22nd	Willie and the Mouse	March 22nd
April 12th	The News Theatre, Leeds	29th
29th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	
29th	Water Babies	
29th	The News Theatre, Nottingham	
April 5th	Western Isles	April 5th
April 5th	The News Theatre, Birmingham	
March 22nd	Wise Guys	March 29th
March 22nd	The News Theatre, Nottingham	
March 22nd	World Garden	April 5th
March 22nd	The News Theatre, Birmingham	12th

FILM SOCIETY NEWS

NINTH SCOTTISH AMATEUR FILM FESTIVAL

The Scottish Amateur Film Festival has been held annually since 1934. This year the Scottish Film Council is holding a competition to decide the best amateur films produced in Britain during the past eight years.

The outstanding prizewinning films entered in the Festival from 1934-1941 were screened at a public showing in the Cosmo Cinema, Glasgow, on Sunday, March 8th. There were two sessions, one at 3 p.m. for non-fiction films and one at 7 p.m. for fiction films.

The adjudication at previous festivals has been done by well-known film directors like Victor Saville, Anthony Asquith, John Grierson, Cavalcanti and Alfred Hitchcock. On this occasion, however, the public adjudicated. Ballot slips were issued to the audience and the results were announced at the conclusion of each session. The Festival was run this year in aid of the Navy League War Comforts Fund.

The Cambridge University Film Society reports: "The Society's present season came to an end with the discussion between Paul Rotha and Karl Meyer held on February 22nd, in connection with a showing of *The Last Laugh*, excerpts from *Caligari* and two recent M.O.I. documentaries—*Our School* and *The Battle of the Books*. At earlier shows during the Lent term were shown *The Rich Bride*, together with *Den Haag*, the six-year-old Dutch *avant-garde* film, and a couple of British abstracts in colour—Len Lye's *Colour Box* and Norman McLaren's *Love on the Wing*. On February 1st the Society presented Jean Vigo's second feature-length film *L'Atalante* (*Zero de Conduite* was shown last year) and *The River*. Basil Wright gave a stimulating talk on "Films and Propaganda" on February 8th. During the season programme notes have been contributed by, among others, Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Richard Massingham, Michael Powell and Forsyth Hardy, and the Society has been privileged to entertain several of those whose films have been shown. It is not proposed to run formal shows during the summer months, but it is hoped to open a fresh season next autumn.

Unfortunately Cavalcanti's *Film and Reality*, booked for the last showing of the season, did not arrive. The Regional Officer of the Ministry of Information stepped into the breach, however, and supplied a representative programme of shorts lasting for two hours. This included *Men of the Lightship*, *Living with Strangers*, *Incident in Moscow Telegraph Office*, and Grierson's *Battle for Oil*.

Manchester and District Film Institute Society and Manchester and Salford Film Society reports: "In the final session of their first joint season 1941-42, the Societies have already presented two standard and two substandard shows. The January show at the Rivoli Cinema had almost entirely a Soviet programme: *We from Kronstadt* proved an admirable revival in these times, and the shorts included *Dagestan*, *Incident in a Moscow Telegraph Office* and *Russian Scenes and Songs*. Trauberg and Kozintsev's *New Babylon* and the American Willard Van Dyck's *Valley*

Town were the main items in a substandard show at the Y.M.C.A. on January 17th. For February the standard films have included *Soviet Frontiers on the Danube* and *Joueurs D'Echecs*, while on substandard we have presented *China Fights for Freedom* and Protazanov's Moscow Art Theatre satire, *Marionettes*. We hope to make the March standard show something of an occasion with a première of Cavalcanti's new survey of realism, *Film and Reality*, and a visit from the Curator of the National Film Library."

The Tyneside Film Society:

The Chairman hopes to revive the activities of the Society next autumn. There is reason to think that the drop in the number of subscriptions this spring was due more to the public not realising the absolute necessity of their guaranteeing support in advance, rather than to lack of interest in the Society.

The Secretary of the Edinburgh Film Guild reports:

"Our recent American programme was voted a great success. The M.G.M. films, *The Old South* and *Forgotten Victory*, are first-rate documentaries—both by the same director, Fred Zinnemann—and can confidently be recommended to Film Societies. *The Pacific* showing was a première—it has, as you may know, just been completed for the British Council. *A Man to Remember* had not been shown widely in Edinburgh when first released, and was new to most people. It was very well received. Harry Watt, who was present, spoke during the interval and paid a tribute to the support Film Societies were giving to the documentary movement. For the next two performances we are showing *Claudine*, with Rotha's *All Those in Favour*; and *Shors*. We are also arranging a special performance of prize-winning amateur films."

The Manchester and Salford Film Society reports that *Film and Reality* (35 mm.) was shown at the Rivoli on Sunday, March 22nd, in place of *Rois du Sport*; the shorts included *Guests of Honour*, and *Line to the Tschirva Hut* (all Cavalcanti films). A questionnaire is to be issued to members of both societies, for indications of their opinion regarding films shown during the season, preferences of features for next season, and general comments and suggestions, for the guidance of the committee. In spite of many difficulties, a very successful season of nine 35 mm. and eight 16 mm. film displays have been held jointly with the Manchester Film Institute Society.

During March the **Devon and Exeter Film Society** presented two programmes. In the first the feature was Michael Powell's *Edge of the World*; in the second Guitry's *Ils Etaient Neuf Célibataires* was shown. Documentary films are shown in all programmes of this Society, in addition to examples of early comedies.

The **Sixth Repertory Show of the Belfast Film Institute Society** took place on March 21st. The main film was Pagnol's *La Femme du Boulanger*.

Dundee and St. Andrews is still busy beating its own and everybody else's records for membership. It now numbers 950 and the cinema is filled to the brim for all shows. Recent programmes

included *Malaria* (Shell Film Unit), *Naples au Baiser du Feu*, and a revival of Disney's *Ferdinand the Bull*.

The Belfast Film Institute Society reports: "Three shows have been held so far this year in addition to the three given in the autumn. At the end of February the sixth show of the season had *Gens du Voyage* as main film with *Children's Story* and *Sing a Song of Sixpence*. The seventh show had as its feature *La Femme du Boulanger*, a very popular attraction. Although our normal seasons in peace-time were of six shows only there is a possibility that two or three extra shows may be put on as a late-spring season. Publication of our Monthly Review will probably continue until June. We hope by that date to begin planning a season for next winter."

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR: As the reviewer of *Three in a Shell-Hole*, a word about Ivor Montagu's word about the review. The function of a reviewer is certainly not to act as a Gallup-poll on audience reaction (a typical plea so often put forward by interested executives in the film trade); otherwise Ivor Montagu would find us writing enthusiastic praise of such anti-Soviet stinkers as *Ninotchka* or *Comrade X*. Anyone who regularly attends popular cinemas knows all about art-object audience relation without the necessity of inquiries from friends; and anybody could have told Ivor Montagu that *Three in a Shell-Hole* would go down like hot cakes with the audience, not because it was good, but because it was Russian. What I object to is the attempt to use the strong bond of friendship between the British and Russian peoples as an argument when discussing a film and its technique. There are too many people about ready to cash in on this cast-iron popularity of Russia and it is difficult for us to be happy about a film that is popular in spite of lousy technique. We have already had the disturbing spectacle of Lord Kemsley trying to sell *Our Russian Allies* and Lord Beaverbrook trying to sell Stalin to the British people. The intellectuals may still need a bit of sales talk; but there is no necessity to sell the U.S.S.R. to the people that stopped the "Jolly George" from sailing.

That much said, it is still important that Russian films shown over here should be well made and have a good line, though I admit even bad ones are better than none at all. The point at issue is, was the dubbing successful, not was the film popular? *Three in a Shell-hole* was bound to be successful, however bad; with true socialist-realism in technique both in idea and production and in its treatment over here it would have been ten times more so. I know it is said that foreign films must have dubbing of some sort for large-scale distribution here. I still maintain that the dubbing on *Three in a Shell-Hole* was stilted and middle-class; and I invite Ivor Montagu to make a trial, in future, of sub-titles or *sotto voce* English interjections if that is the best he can do with lip-synching. Ivor Montagu and I both want as many good Russian films as possible shown over here: if any film is not particularly calculated to help and is also lousy technically, I shall certainly, in a small-circulation film paper, continue to say so.

Yours, etc.,

FRANK SAINSBURY

Church Street,
Shoreham, Kent.

(continued on page 44)

SCIENTIFIC FILM SOCIETIES

THE formation of a branch of the Federation of Ayrshire Scientific Film Societies in the north of the county has succeeded in a solid if unspectacular manner. The Ardrossan Society is organised and managed by the Association of Scientific Workers in conjunction with the Council of the Federation. Difficulties have arisen in starting off the Society, although with five successful shows to date the local committee feel that the worst of the teething troubles are over. There are 100 members of whom (despite travelling inconveniences) 70-80 have attended each meeting. Their enthusiasm is encouraging so that the outlook for next season is promising; and a substantial membership increase may be anticipated. Members have shown commendable interest in the films shown. The results of the appraisals to date are a valuable indication of the most popular type of film and a useful guide to the building of future programmes. Mr. Stewart Paterson is president and Mr. W. T. Cunningham secretary of the Society.

The desirability of forming a Scientific Film Society in Dalmellington (Ayrshire) was discussed last October by senior officials of the local mining company, the head masters and science staffs of the schools, and representatives of the local clergy and medical profession. From the outset it was obvious that the success of the venture would depend on the good-will of the popular landlord of a local hostelry. Indeed the Society would have been still-born but for the sound projector, comfortable lounge and refreshments placed at its disposal by Mr. Joe McCardle, of the Eglinton Hotel, who also undertakes the duties of projectionist. Since mid-November the Society has held six meetings. Thirty-seven members joined within the first fortnight of its formation. As the accommodation in the hotel lounge is limited the membership list had to be closed. The Society is affiliated to the Federation of Ayrshire Scientific Film Societies, the Council of which books most of the programmes as well as undertaking some of the secretarial work. The present feeling is that, rather than expand, the Society should continue, for the 1942-43 season at least, in its present form with a restricted membership and comfortable meeting place. The secretary is Dr. E. S. Lee.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

(continued from page 37)

batics episode, provide modest excitement in a film which is more remarkable for observation than for drama. *Ferry Pilot* is beautifully made and remarkable for Pat Jackson's handling of a small group of pilots around whom the action revolves and who are skilfully sketched in as very human and pleasant people.

Propaganda Value. The film reminds us of the complexity of jobs which make up the machinery of modern warfare. It suggests also that friendly people, with a sense of humour and a deep love of their craft, may be no less efficient than the grim automata beloved of Nazi ideologists, a reminder that, if he is given his head, the British craftsman, whether he be an engineer or an air pilot, is a good enough man to win the war.



STRAND FILMS

MAKERS OF DOCUMENTARY
FILMS SINCE 1934

▼

THE STRAND FILM COMPANY LTD.

DONALD TAYLOR - MANAGING DIRECTOR
ALEXANDER SHAW - DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION

5a UPPER ST. MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.2
MERTON PARK STUDIOS, 269 KINGSTON RD, S.W.19

DOCUMENTARY AND EDUCATION

(By EDITH MANVELL)

THERE is no greater indictment of our general educational system than that at this time when initiative, competence and co-operation in every branch of our national war effort is needed, there is so much muddle, indecision, and failure to cope with emergencies. The result of this lack of co-ordination and of the desire to pass on the responsibility for action to someone else means that the most urgent things do not get done. Whilst we delay and hesitate and ignore the lessons of our disasters, our national prestige declines.

As long as the school curriculum continues to make little provision for making people aware of the obligations of citizenship, other methods must be used to arouse this consciousness in the general public. The press, the film and the radio are the principal channels for conveying information. They can influence public opinion and rouse the interest of the greatest number of people simultaneously. The responsibility of giving the right sort of information rest in the hands of those who control these three services. The greatest moral integrity on the part of those who wield such power is therefore essential.

The film is the only one of these services which can make its appeal to a large gathering of people who have come together individually and form a temporary community whose reactions can be observed. People go to the cinema to be entertained and not for instruction; but if a documentary film presents a theme which is related to a human experience with which they are in sympathy or which they share, then the audience appreciates it and it will have a direct influence on their attitude of mind towards the problem which has been presented.

In these days of upheaval, when homes are broken up, and families separated, when a feeling of uncertainty and frustration and boredom makes decent people doubt their old ideals and distorts their sense of values, a film like *They Also Serve* restores the sanity of human kindness and neighbourly common sense. There is nothing spectacular, nothing consciously heroic about this story of a woman who serves the needs of her family, who rubs her husband's rheumatic back when he comes home from work, who helps her young neighbours, and who by her patience and friendly example makes her rather selfish daughter feel quietly ashamed of herself. This film is essentially human and free from the taint of sentimentality or a patronising attitude. It is for the homes of such people, for the most fundamental of human relationships, that we are fighting. All the qualities which the mother in *They Also Serve* shows are needed in the efficient running of this war for the people.

It is possible through films of this nature to do something which neither lecturing or preaching can do. For instance if more films on evacuation could have been treated in this way and widely shown in reception areas and in those towns from which women and children were evacuated, the insurmountable psychological problems might have been humanly solved instead of being officially ignored. *Living with Strangers* does, indeed, go some way towards presenting the problem properly. There is a need for these "social" films which frankly present themes which deal with those problems which harass so many people; problems which assume gigantic proportions until a sympathetic

and understanding person restores a sense of balance and wisely guides a worried community to find its own solution to them.

In a society which regarded education as a social service instead of as a means of instilling a lot of miscellaneous facts and arbitrary rules of conduct into the minds of more or less unwilling victims, many of the difficulties which beset adult life would never arise. But as it is, few people have been encouraged to combine competence with human understanding when taking the initiative or making decisions. Only the anti-social and selfish people seem capable of being efficient; the rest of the community just drifts along, waiting to be told what to do, making mistakes, and correcting them by bitter experience. The right kind of education would avoid much of this, or at least it could set things going along the right lines.

Films can show us how sensible and competent people get on with the most ordinary jobs whether they are directly concerned with the war effort or with the welfare of people who have other responsibilities. How, for instance, does the housewife combine home duties with work in a factory? Some women can do it, others get in an awful muddle and the home and the work suffer in consequence.

I should like to see a film on infant welfare, not as an instructional film made in an institution run by a highly trained staff, but in the home of a woman like the mother in *They Also Serve*—a working class home such as many women have to live in. Where conditions are bad, the criticism implied might rouse the social consciousness of those who see the film and make those who themselves live in such conditions aware that they have a right to something better after this war is over. Another film could treat the theme of the nursery school from a new angle; that is, in its influence on the home life of the child who attends such a school. Do the children who go to these schools live in two worlds? Are their minds confused by having to change over twice a day from one environment to another? Are they bewildered by having to make a rapid mental readjustment when they get home, where they may get a "box on the ears" for doing something which at school they are encouraged to do? Are the parents being educated as well as the children, or do they send

them to school because they do not want the trouble and responsibility of looking after them? Though many institutions offer better conditions than many homes, they can never supplant the home, nor should they. It is for the people that the fight goes on and against such things as bad housing—bad cooking and housekeeping—ignorance and low standards of living. It is also against similar inefficiency and lack of responsibility in national affairs that we are struggling.

Many films, simple, short and direct would be better than a few long films which are too comprehensive. Not only should they appear in cinemas just once, but they should be available for clubs, welfare centres and other institutions, through the local library projection service as the need arises.

Post-war reconstruction will not be just a matter of rebuilding our devastated cities, nor should it be left entirely to governing bodies to carry out. Reconstruction will mean very little if the greatest problems of modern civilisation—the spiritual or psychological aspect of reconstruction—is neglected.

This is one subject which is going to cause a lot of trouble in the future, but whether it will ever come in the province of documentary films depends on its social application. That is, the religious and moral education which is going to be inflicted on people, especially school children, in the future. Is it going to be left in the hands of professional theologians to dictate on these matters, or are people going to ask that moral up-bringing in the future must be based on the development of a sense of social and individual responsibility to the community, and the positive idea of service as something which is worthwhile because it contributes to the happiness of others? What will meet with official approval in this matter may leave the public indifferent. The mass of people will not be impressed by religious revivals; they will continue to drift on in a rather purposeless manner, gradually losing their sense of values, unless some moral objective replaces the unprogressive ideas of controversial theology or the sentimentality of many of its disciples. People to-day want to feel that there is a real purpose in being alive, not just as individuals but as the founders of a new kind of community where vital issues are not entirely based on physical needs. Can this unformed, this rather vague urge to a new ideal be expressed through the medium of film?



FILM LIBRARIES

Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternative booking dates, and to return the films immediately after use. H. A hire charge is made.

F. Free distribution. Sd. Sound. St. Silent.

Association of Scientific Workers, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films*. A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. On request, Committee will give advice on programme make-up and choice of films.

Austin Film Library, 24 films of motoring interest, industrial, technical and travel. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau*, Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Australian Trade Publicity Film Library. 18 films of Australian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F. 3, sound films on 9.5 mm. available from *Pathescope*.

British Commercial Gas Association, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & a few St. F.

British Council Film Department, 3 Hanover Street, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1941. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses for 100 sound and silent documentary films.

British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. (a) *National Film Library Loan Section* to stimulate film appreciation by making available copies of film classics. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. H. (b) *Collection of Educational Films*. The Institute has a small collection of educational films not available from other sources. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

British Instructional Films, 111 Wardour Street, W.1. Feature films; Pathé Gazettes and Pathetones; a good collection of nature films. A new catalogue is in preparation. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Canadian Pacific Film Library. 15 films of Canadian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity. A wide variety of films. Available from the *Empire Film Library*.

Central Council for Health Education. Catalogue of some 250 films, mostly of a specialist health nature, dealing with Diphtheria, Housing, Maternity, Child Welfare, Personal Hygiene, Prevention of Diseases, Physical Fitness, etc. Most films produced by societies affiliated to the Council, or on loan from other 16 mm. distributors (e.g. B.C.G.A.). Six films produced direct for the Council also available, including *Fear and Peter Brown*, *Carry on Children*, and *Breath of Danger*.

35 mm. and 16 mm. Sd. and St. H. and F.

Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Has absorbed the *Empire Film Library* and the *G.P.O. Film Library*. Also contains all new M.O.I. non-theatrical films. No general catalogue yet issued. A hand list of M.O.I. films is available. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Coal Utilisation Joint Council, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Crookes' Laboratories, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. *Colloids in Medicine*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Dartington Hall Film Unit, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

Dominion of New Zealand Film Library, 415 Strand, W.C.2. 22 films of industry, scenery and sport. Includes several films about the Maoris. 16 mm. St. F.

Educational Films Bureau, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Educational General Services, 37 Golden Square, W.1. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. & St. H.

Electrical Development Association, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. Further films of direct advertising appeal are available to members of the Association only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Empire Film Library. Films primarily of Empire interest, with a useful subject index. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. and a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, W.1. *Mouvements Vibratoires*. A film on simple harmonic motion. French captions. 35 mm. & 16 mm. St. H.

Ford Film Library, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Gaumont-British Equipments, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Also feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

G.P.O. Film Library. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. F.

Kodak, Ltd., Kingsway, W.C.2. (a) *Kodascope Library*. Instructional, documentary, feature, western, comedy. Strong on early American comedies. 16 mm. & 8 mm. St. H. (A separate *List of Educational Films*, extracted from the above, is also published. A number of films have teaching notes.) (b) *Medical Film Library*. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

March of Time, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* items, including *Soldiers with Wings*, *Britain's R.A.F.*, *Dutch East Indies*. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Mathematical Films. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. St. H.

Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester 17. *Planned Electrification*, a film on the electrification of the winding and surface gear in a coal mine. Available for showing to technical and educational groups. 16 mm. Sd. F.

Pathescope, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, W.1. Some 25 technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Religious Film Library, Church Walk, Dunstable, Beds. Films of religious and temperance appeal. Also list of supporting films from other sources. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Scottish Central Film Library, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere. Library available to groups in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Sound-Film Services, 27 Charles Street, Cardiff. Library of selected films including *Massingham's And So to Work*. *Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. 16 mm. Sd. H.

South African Railways Publicity and Travel Bureau, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2. 10 films of travel and general interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & 4 St. versions. F.

Southern Railway, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts, 9.5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Workers' Film Association, Ltd., Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1. Films of democratic and co-operative interest. Notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Some prints for sale. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.